



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Address to the National Congress
Admiral Cecil Haney
Sunday, 05 AUG, 2012
Palau
As Prepared for Delivery**

Thank you Ambassador Reed-Rowe for your kind introduction.

Senate Vice President Kesolie, House Speaker Idechong, President Toribiong, High Chiefs, Chief Justice, Members of the Congress, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen of Palau, good afternoon. I am honored to be in your country.

I would like to echo the sentiments of Assistant Secretary Campbell in thanking the people of Palau for their continued and dedicated service in the United States Armed Forces, especially those who have paid the ultimate price. I have personally served with Sailors in the United States Navy who are from Palau. They are consistently among the most dedicated Sailors I have served with and I am proud to call them shipmates.

For more than 60 years the United States has enjoyed a close relationship with the people of Palau. Today, as the United States whole of government is refocusing on the Asia-Pacific, our Navy's commitment to this vital region will continue to endure. The United States is a maritime nation and has been since our founding. The United States Navy has been sailing the Pacific for more than 150 years and will continue to do so into the future. My Sailors, ships, submarines and aircraft have been ever present, perhaps just over the horizon, sometimes on shore, but there, providing maritime security in the Pacific, interconnected with like-minded Allies, partners and friends. Our prosperity and security is dependent on the safe movement of commerce and respect for each other's Exclusive Economic Zones.

The United States Navy continues to foster a strong relationship with Palau. This nation continues to be a desired destination for our ship visits. In the last year, six United States ships have visited Palau. In early July, USS Benfold visited the port of Koror. While here, the ship co-hosted a reception with the United States Embassy to celebrate our nation's Independence Day. During that reception, the commanding officer, Commander Dave Oden, visited with Palauan president, Mr. Johnson Toribiong. There he stated, and I quote, "The United States is very proud of the partnership it has with Palau, and, on this Fourth of July, we reflect on those Palauan service members who have fought side by side with Americans in our armed forces." This is a great example of just what our relationship with the people of Palau means to the United States Navy. It is truly appreciated.

Our Naval vessels are also participating in the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI). This is a program which leverages United States Coast Guard ships that are transiting the area to increase the Coast Guard and Palau's Maritime Domain Awareness. This ultimately supports its maritime law enforcement operations in the waters around Palau. We also have a desire to amend the existing ship-rider agreement with Palau to conduct law enforcement operations from United States Navy vessels.

We are continuing to participate in the Forum Fisheries Agency operations by using long range patrol aircraft. These flights are mainly focused on covering Palau and Federated States of Micronesia's Exclusive Economic Zones while coordinating with your Pacific Patrol Boats.

The Navy also plays a role in the removal of unexploded ordnance left from World War II. We are very sensitive to your concerns. Our teams in Guam traveled to Palau, twice in 2011 and most recently in May of this year, for the removal of ordnance in Koror, Peleliu, and other areas where the danger exists. We will continue to work to remove unexploded ordnance for the safety of the people of Palau, as well as for the protection of the environment.

Finally, there is the Civic Action Team on Palau, manned on a rotational basis by United States soldiers, Sailors, and airmen. It is a prime example of our long-standing and continuous friendship. Our Navy Seabees express real affection for the nation of Palau and look forward to their chance to join the community here. They often mention the warmth of the people and the long-enduring friendships they make. The Pacific Fleet commitment to Palau and the Civic Action Team remains, and will continue to be enduring.

In closing, I once again wish to express how important our relationship with Palau is to the United States. We have enjoyed working with you over the last 60 years and we look forward to working with you for the next 60 years and beyond.

Thank you - Ke kmal mesaul.